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customer service newsletter

The GOLD Standard

Going From “I don’t know” to “I’ll find out”...

In January 1999, when Mayor Williams’ took office, the District of Columbia Government was notorious for providing poor customer service to its constituents. The crux of this issue centered on how difficult it was to obtain the most basic information or service. Other chronic customer service issues included a lack of responsiveness to written correspondence, unpredictable delays in scheduled services, and a lack of accountability for inefficiency and poor service.

To address these issues, Mayor Williams took an unprecedented approach. For the first time, the District of Columbia Government began building an infrastructure in which customer service is the priority outcome for all government activities. The cornerstone of this infrastructure is the belief that citizens are experts on what government is and what it should be. This philosophy has spurred a culture change across all government agencies in cus-

tomers service practices, with the primary goal being customer satisfaction.

To achieve customer satisfaction, the District has clearly defined gold standard customer service. The definition highlights customer service as the whole “service delivery chain”, from intake of citizen service requests to feedback on how services were provided.

To reach this customer satisfaction goal, Customer Service Operations is charged with ensuring that customer service policies are developed, implemented and permeate every level of the District government. The policies that are developed identify and substantively address all areas of customer interaction and service, including access to services, delivery of services, customer feedback and operational improvements.

To this end, Customer Service Operations is aggressively

working to set policies that govern the District’s practices of providing reliable entry points to access all agencies, instilling responsiveness to constituent calls, correspondence and requests for service, ensuring that front-line constituent contacts are handled with the highest level of professionalism and customer service, and ensuring that agency services are delivered within established, easily understood, and widely known performance standards.

Over the past few years, the District Government has taken important steps to overcome the reputation for inaccessible, unresponsive, and impolite services. We have raised our expectations and have never been closer to reaching and exceeding our goal of consistently providing gold standard customer service.

In Mayor Williams’ Words...

As public servants, we, employees of the District of Columbia Government are all responsible for serving the diverse but basic needs of the District’s constituency. In fact, by making the choice to be government employees, we must meet and exceed the challenge to provide a positive customer service experience every time we interact with customers, whether they are internal or external to the government.

I am proud of the collective strides the government has made in cus-

tomers service. We are a more responsive government, a more efficient government and a more accountable government. We’ve set customer service standards and expectations and are meeting them, more often than not we are exceeding them. We have a lot to be proud of.

Thank you for sharing my vision and partnering with me to improve customer service in the District Government. Our partnership is making D.C. one of the best places to live, work and play!

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.” ---- Aristotle

Answering the Call of Duty

The Mayor's City-Wide Call Center was established in 1999 by Mayor Williams. The objective of the operation is to provide a "one stop" service experience for constituents, residents and visitors in their search for D.C. government services, numbers and information. The Call Center makes the public's interaction with the city government less frustrating and less prone to delays.

The Call Center is open Monday – Friday from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm and is staffed with 27 Customer Service Representatives. Service can be provided in more than **140 languages**.



Mayor Williams takes a request for service from a resident at the City-wide Call Center.

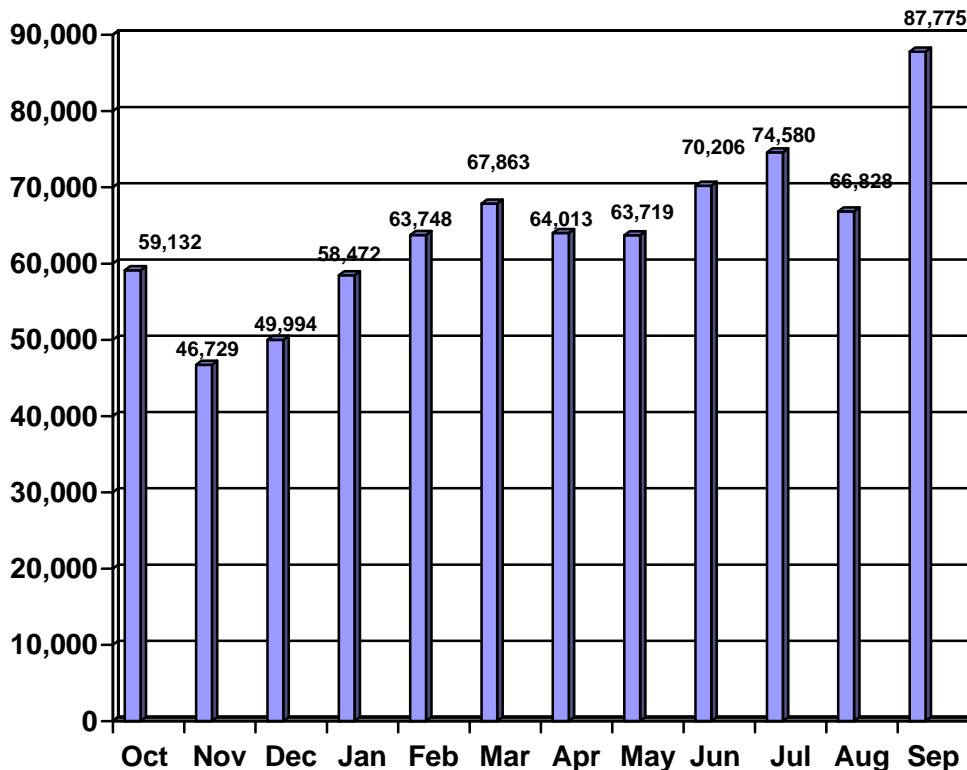


Customer Service Representatives take calls Monday thru Friday, from 7am until 7pm.



In FY03 the Call Center received almost 800,000 calls, with a monthly average of 65,000. The heaviest call volume occurs on Mondays and after holiday weekends when the volume can spike to 5,000 calls per day.

City-wide Call Center Total Call Volume - YTD 773,059 calls



At Your Service

The Mayor's City-wide Call Center serves as residents' main access to the government for basic city services. As such, the Call Center serves as the "front end" of service delivery. Agencies, or the "back end" are committed to fulfilling service requests. The requests for service that the Call Center receives range from abandoned auto removal to yard waste collection.

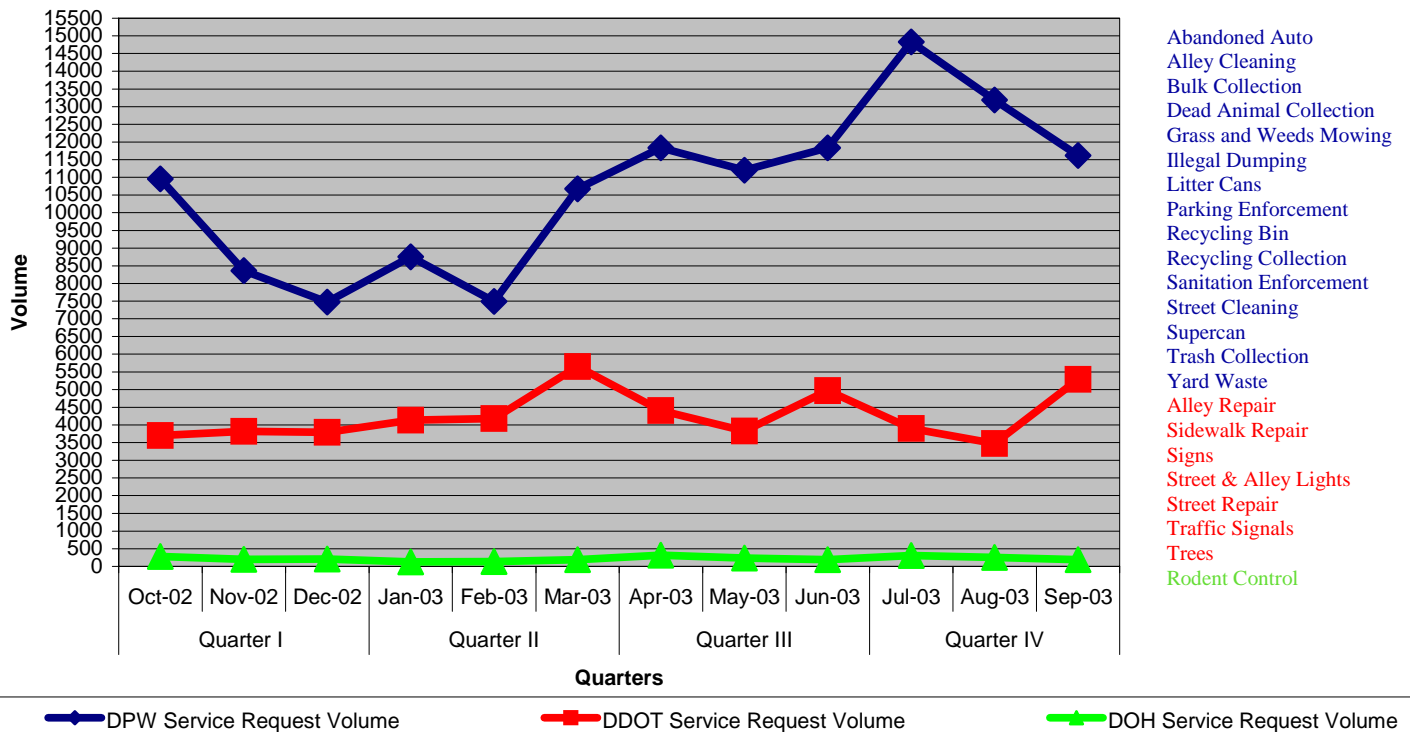
When a constituent calls the Call Center, their request is entered into the "service request system" and they are informed of the expected timeframe for service delivery. The constituent is also given a tracking number so that they can check on the status of their request as necessary.

The volume of requests for city services has increased significantly.

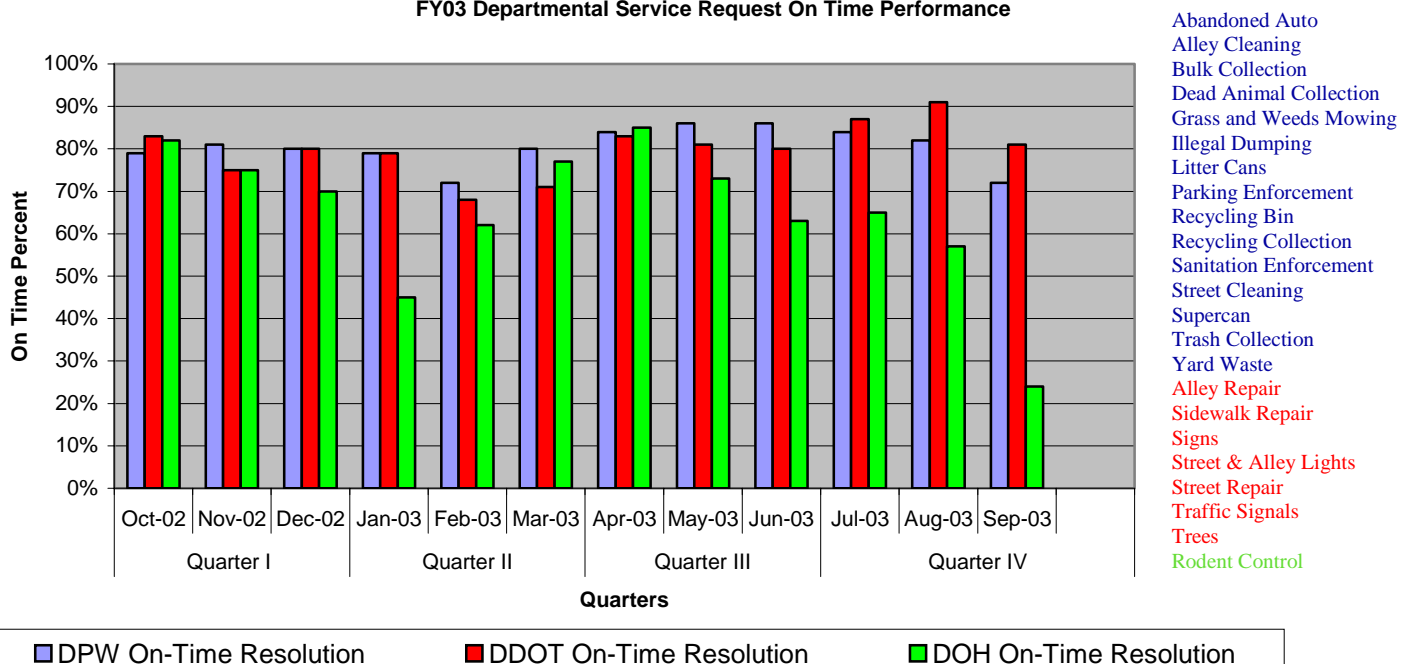
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At Your Service

antly from approximately 50,000 in 1999 to a staggering 194,000 in 2003. Along with this notable rise in the number of requests, is the considerable improvement in on time service provision, as shown in the **FY03 Departmental Service Request Volume Report** and **FY03 Departmental Service Request On Time Performance** graphs below. cont. pg. 3

FY03 Departmental Service Request Volume Report



FY03 Departmental Service Request On Time Performance



**cont. from pg 3—
At Your Service**

The ability to easily request and receive basic city services has been key in Mayor Williams efforts around revitalizing the City of Washington, D.C. As evidenced by the sharp increase in the number of constituents' service requests, residents are taking pride improving their neighborhoods and are also taking an active role in maintaining the City as a whole.

Customer Service Operations, in partnership with District Government agencies, is actively working to ensure customer satisfaction - from the intake of service requests to the actual operational improvements made based on customer feedback. The District of Columbia Government is at the service of the D.C.'s residents and visitors!

To obtain more information about services and to track the District's service delivery performance, please visit the District's website at www.dc.gov.

Quick Reference Phone Numbers

Mayor's Citywide Call Center	(202) 727-1000
Department of Motor Vehicles	(202) 727-5000
Answers, Please! (Human Services)	211
Mental Health Crisis Hotline	(888) 7WE-Help
Office of Tax and Revenue	(202) 727-4829
DCRA	(202) 442-4400
Council Offices – Main	(202) 724-8000
PEPCO	(877) 737-2662
Power outages	(202) 833-7500
Downed wires	(202) 872-3432
WASA	(202) 612-3400
Police, Fire and EMS	
Emergency	911
Non Emergency	311



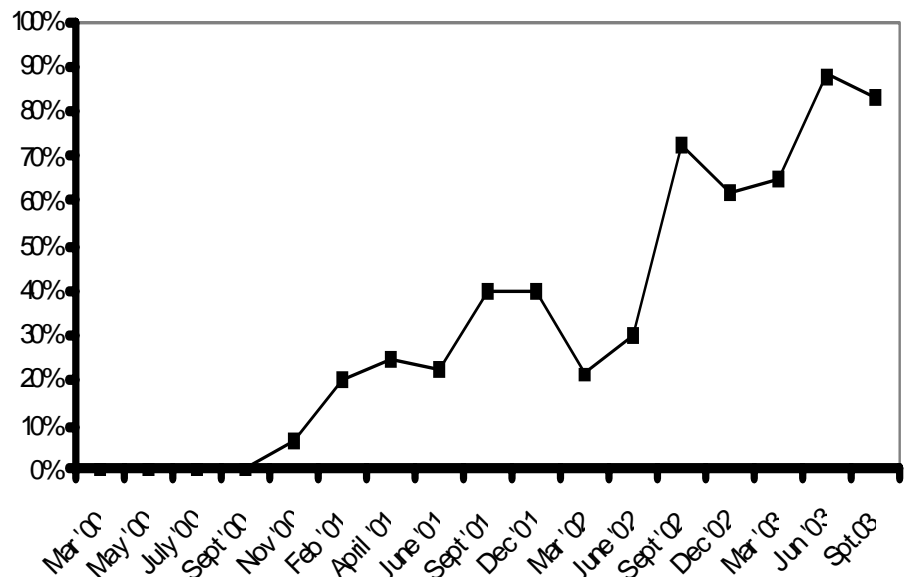
Covert Ops...

The District of Columbia Government has met the challenge of defining gold standard customer service. An integral piece of this effort includes raising the bar in service and, as importantly, measuring performance against those standards. Consistent with this effort is the District's "Tester" program.

The "Tester" program utilizes independent individuals or "testers" to pose as constituents and to validate agencies compliance with established customer service standards. The results of this highly successful program include the heightened awareness of the culture of accountability, measurable improvements in service provision and numerous operational enhancements across the government.

One area of customer service that has recognized the most notable improvement is telephone based customer service. The District's goal is that 85% of government agencies will be rated good or excellent in courtesy, knowledge, etiquette and overall impression, as determined by the "Tester" program results. Illustrated by the Telephone Tester Results graphic, agencies have met and continue to exceed this challenge.

Telephone Tester Results



Looking Forward



In the coming months, a number of unprecedented customer focused initiatives will be underway across the government. Specifically, in keeping with the Mayor's goal of attracting new residents to the city, District agencies will be working to become more attuned to managing the varied needs of a more **racially and ethnically diverse constituency**-- face-to-face and by telephone. In addition, while agencies' service provision performance, like telephone based customer service, will continue to be monitored, other customer service functions will be formally surveyed as well. These areas include **constituent correspondence** and **voicemail acknowledgement and responsiveness**. Constituents will even have the opportunity to participate in the District's quality assurance, or **covert ops...**, processes.

Also, look forward to Issue 2 of the **GOLD** Standard in a few months!